

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT SAVANNAH.

It is pleasant to see a session of the General Assembly in which there is no one dominating influence which overshadows the majority of the commissioners. Such seems to have been the recent General Assembly. In its deliberations all the members seem to have had full freedom and privilege.

It was an Assembly which for the most part was free from great divisive questions, and therefore it could give and did give special attention to the work of evangelism, and it took several forward steps.

The Calvin celebration was, of course, the central feature of the Assembly. The splendid addresses which were delivered will be printed in book form by the Presbyterian Committee of Publication, so soon as advance subscriptions shall have provided the means.

The Central University discussion terminated very happily. The questions connected with it were ably argued and carefully weighed. Col. B. H. Young had complained a year ago, that the transfer of the control of Central University from the two Synods of Kentucky to a self-perpetuating board of trustees was unlawful. The Assembly of 1908 sustained his complaint, and called on the Synod to revise its action. The Synod (last fall) replied that as the transfer was completed, the Synod had not the power to resume the control. Col. Young complained to the Assembly of 1909 against this action of Synod. The Assembly by a vote of 93 to 82, refused to sustain his complaint and said: "We recognize that the administration of the affairs of Central University of Kentucky has passed beyond the control of the Synod of Kentucky and the General Assembly."

But the Assembly did not approve of the haste with which the transfer was effected, pending the complaint. It reminded the Synod that "the lower courts are subject to the review and control of the higher courts in regular gradation." And while expressing its interest and sympathy in the welfare and growth of Central University, it added: "This Assembly instructs all our lower courts to take no action that will tend to lessen the Church's direct control and ownership of any of our educational institutions."

The plea has been made that "a complaint does not arrest the action complained of." We do not know that this point was decided in direct terms by the Assembly, but the final words of the Assembly (quoted above) appear to us to say clearly that in a case like this, the transfer of property ought not to be made until the "complaint" has been heard and decided.

We appreciate fully the motives of the Kentucky Synod, and its members in their action, for we esteem them most highly. There were some reasons for their action which have not been publicly discussed which would merit the approval of our readers, and largely reduce the regrets which have been felt.

The questions concerning polygamy did not come directly before the Assembly. The complaint of Rev. Mr. Mills was rather upon the question whether the Synod of South Carolina was under obligation to reverse the action of Presbytery and to institute charges against one of our missionaries for admitting such a person.

The Assembly decided that it was under no such obligation.

The Assembly took under consideration the question of providing schools on mission soil to educate the children of our missionaries. It is well.

A recommendation of the Foreign Mission Committee was adopted to the effect that hereafter single women will not be appointed as missionaries unless they shall have graduated at some college. In the case of those women who expect to take charge of schools, this is wise and prudent. But there is a great deal of Zenana work to be done and in this work there is another qualification, and that is approachability. We trust that this class of workers will not be rejected.

This Assembly was notable for its appointment of ad interim committees: 1. To devise plans for securing the titles of our Church property; 2. To devise plans for coordinating the work of our Executive Committees; 3. To consider the appointment of commissioners to the Assembly by the Synods instead of by the Presbyteries; 4. As to the admission to the church of a converted heathen, having more than one wife; 5. On the providing of schools for the children of missionaries; 6. To phrase an amendment to the Confession of Faith on "elect infants"; 7. To plan for the semi-centennial anniversary of the organization of our Church; 8. Concerning the "Day of the Reformation"; 9. On a judicial tribunal to hear appeals and complaints from the Synods.

A new Executive Committee was organized, on "Schools and Colleges." Rev. W. E. Boggs, D. D., was elected secretary of this committee and the Assembly appointed the first Sabbath in June and the third Sabbath in September as the seasons for taking collections for this cause.

The Permanent Committee on Evangelism was empowered to elect a General Secretary and to call ministers to be Assembly evangelists, if it can be done without involving the Assembly in pecuniary responsibilities.

The Assembly asks the Presbyteries to vote upon the question whether the traveling expenses of commissioners shall continue to be paid by the individual Presbyteries or shall be paid out of a common fund provided by the Assembly.

In connection with the semi-centennial of our Church, the Assembly recommends the raising of a memorial fund for Home Missions.

Such are some of the more important steps taken at this meeting. It was a wise and prudent body and its action will promote the work of the Redeemer.

The defenders of the saloon traffic are much given to denouncing all opponents of that abominable business as puritanical and hypocritical. This should make little difference to the right-minded. And shows great poverty of argument when personal denunciation is resorted to. Besides, those who are conscious of truth and integrity are not hurt in the slightest degree by the gibes of a class who support a traffic which is now and always has been regarded as one which is so inherently lawless that no statutes which have ever been framed have regulated it into uprightness or lifted it above the position of menace to the common weal.